Apple Consultants Network

August 3 2017 • Business Team, Account Manager, Business Leader, MGR + • Global

Overview

According to CompTIA's 2016 SMB Technology Report, over 70% of small businesses rely on third-party IT service providers to manage their technology infrastructures.

This guide will introduce you to the Apple Consultants Network (ACN), Apple's approved community of external IT service providers. You will learn how to engage with ACN members to present additional support to customers and discover ways to find and partner with ACN members in your community.

The Apple Consultants Network is a community of independent, local IT service companies who provide IT consulting and support for Apple technology. Each ACN member is under contract with Apple and their technical skills have been verified through completion of required technical certifications. They can be leveraged to assist customers with solution design, set up, deployment, and onsite support.

ACN Member Business Models and Services Offered

ACN members focus on a wide range of IT services and operate under a handful of business models. All ACN members will take on a one-time engagement, but their longterm objectives with customers will depend on their preferred business model and specific customer needs.

Support Types

Troubleshooting	Focus on fixing problems that occur in the home or small office/ business
Managed Services	Provide outsourced day-to-day technology management functions
Solution	Specialize in implementing and supporting a specific solution e.g., point of sale (POS)

Business Models

Project

- Perform services by individual project(s) or on a time and materials basis.
- Focus on specific customer requests.

Monthly Contract

- Provide proactive support and managed services.
- Manage and support an entire IT environment for a monthly fee.

Common IT Services Offered by ACN Members

- IT consultation, including evaluation of customer's needs and recommendations of third party solutions.

- Installation of hardware, set up of apps, networking, and services.
- Using Apple Deployment Programs to set up MDM and deploy multiple Apple devices
- Ongoing IT support to ensure successful use of Apple technology in their businesses

> Engage ACN members early in the customer discovery process. As you discover more about the customers, think about their technology needs and resources they will need to implement them.

Finding the Right ACN Member

Using the ACN Locator

The ACN Locator is a customer-facing tool used to help you and your customers locate ACN members. It's available at consultants.apple.com or via the "Search the Apple Consultants Network" link on apple.com/retail/business.

To use the ACN Locator (from consultants.apple.com):

1. Select **Search the Apple Consultants Network**.
2. Enter a zip code/postal code or city, state/province/country.
3. Click **Search.**
4. Review the results, they will show how many ACN members are available within a close proximity to your search location. They are sorted by distance, so be sure to review your options.

Refining Your Search

Each customer has personalized needs and goals. Connecting them to an ACN member with specialized skills contributes to positive customer experiences and satisfaction. To search for consultants with specific skills:

1. Navigate to consultants.apple.com.
2. Click **Find a [product focus] consultant.**
3. Enter zip code/postal code or city, state/province/country.
4. Click **Search.**
5. Sort by Services.
6. The search results will be tailored to include only the consultants who provide services for the criteria you selected.

> **Selecting your country**
>
> Enable the appropriate country by selecting the country flag on the bottom right section of the web page.

Using the Company Profiles

Each ACN member's company profile page provides a wealth of information.

- Number of consultants tracked and verified by Apple
- Headquarters
- List of locations
- Website URL
- Ratings and reviews written by customers and approved by Apple
- List of certifications validated by Apple

Building Relationships

Carefully evaluating and understanding specific capabilities of ACN members is key to developing relationships and helping connect customers with the right ACN member when needed.

ACN Interviews

Set up time to host local ACN members individually and get to know them better. Use the questions below as a guide to learn more.

Question	What to listen for
What is your value proposition for potential and current customers?	Services that enable Apple solutions and help customers be more efficient with their technology.
Do you currently support Apple IT environments for your customer(s)?	How long they have been supporting Apple products and the mix of environments supported.
What is your targeted customer demographic?	Specific type and size of customer or business they are comfortable working with.
Do you have specialization in particular verticals?	Specific knowledge in a vertical (e.g., retail, restaurant, legal, healthcare, etc.)
What distance are you willing to travel to meet with a customer?	Will they be able to support additional stores in your market?
Are you familiar with Apple deployment programs, including DEP and VPP?	Level of experience deploying devices with DEP and VPP.

Do you bill customers by the hour, project, or monthly contract?	How they bill customers for their services.

ACN Networking Meetings

Hosting an ACN networking meeting is a great way for our teams to meet many ACN members at one time. The intent of this meeting is to bring together several ACN members and begin the relationship building process. Work with your Business Leader to set up a meeting for your store.

Identifying Potential ACN Members

You may meet companies that could be a fit to join the ACN program. Understanding Apple's requirements for participation and the profile of an ideal ACN member will assist you when speaking with potential members.

> Consult with your Business Leader before directing potential companies to apply for the program. Once a company applies, they will be subject to review and approval from Apple before becoming officially enrolled in the program.

Ideal Candidates

Use the information below to determine if a company is a good fit to join.

- You (and your team) would feel comfortable introducing them to current and potential customers.
- Company's focus is helping customers with IT needs—including consulting, set up, ongoing support, etc.
- Expertise in a specific vertical or solution.
- They're excited about the opportunity to work with Apple.

Program Requirements

If you have a company that is interested in joining, direct them to consultants.apple.com and select **Become a Consultant** in the menus.

Become a Consultant

The "Become a Consultant" link will provide additional information about the ACN program and Apple's requirements. Please note, each country the program operates in has an individual website. There are slight differences in the program depending on which country you reside in. Ensure the customer is accessing the correct information by having them select their country flag located on the bottom of the page.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the best way to find an ACN member with a specific skill?

Use the ACN website and apply solution filters to the search process. You may choose a combination of filters to refine your search.

The ACN member we work with the most isn't on the ACN Locator. Why?

The ACN Locator only includes members whose certifications are verified as current—meaning certifications pertaining to the latest OS or the two previous versions.

How do you determine which solutions the ACN member can support?

Solution areas attributed to the ACN member are driven by certifications or training credentials that Apple can track and verify.

Where do the ratings and reviews come from?

The ratings and reviews are generated by the clients of our ACN members and are approved by Apple before being published.

Some ACN members have no ratings, does this mean they're not good?

Some ACN members invest time in cultivating their client relationships and seeking out feedback. We have generally found that ACN members who have received customer reviews greatly increase their probability of selection. Other members choose not to use this feature of the website. Encourage them to invest in the ratings platform with a personal story of how you rely on ratings and reviews.

Can ACN members receive a commission for sending new business leads to our store?

Yes. Review the Business Affiliate Guide for more information. Note, Business Affiliate is only available in AMR.

What if the ACN member is an Authorized Reseller or Service Provider, can we still work with them?

Yes. Some ACN members are also part of other Apple Channel Programs. If you have an ACN member who is an Authorized Reseller determine the best way to partner on customer opportunities.

Resources

Contact your local program team if you have specific questions about the ACN Program in your country.

Global ACN Resources

AMR — acn@apple.com

EMEA — acn@euro.apple.com

ANZ — acn_anz@apple.com

JPN — acn-jpn@group.apple.com